

TANF

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-193) replaced the AFDC and JOBS Programs with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) which includes the TANF Work Program (TWP). TANF was reauthorized by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) (Pub. L. 109-171). The TANF Program, administered by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), provides benefits for needy families with dependent children under age 18 without regard to race, creed, or national origin. Monthly TANF benefits are available for eligible children and their needy caretaker relatives who do not have enough income or resources to meet their everyday needs.

The goal of the TANF Work Program is to end the dependence on public assistance by helping you prepare for a job by providing job readiness training, job skills training, vocational training, other educational training programs and assisting you in finding and keeping a job.

TANF TIME LIMITS

A family with an adult included in the TANF grant can only receives TANF benefits for a lifetime maximum of 60 months. If you are not exempt from work requirements, you will be considered a work eligible individual and you will be referred to the TANF Work Program. The 60-month life time limit will be reduced to a maximum of 24 months if you do not participate satisfactorily in approved work activities.



Unless you meet a work exemption, monthly TANF benefits will not be paid to you if you fail to cooperate with the TANF Work Program or meet the requirements of your employability development plan.

EXEMPTIONS

You may be eligible for an exemption from TANF Work Program requirements for the following reasons:

- Disability;
- Caretaker of an ill or incapacitated person (verified by a physician);
- Age- Over 60 or under 18;
- Domestic violence - documented by a physician and law enforcement records (not to exceed 12 months);
- Temporary Disability - not lasting more than 30 days;
- Pregnancy - third trimester based on medical complications verified by a physician;
- Substance Abuse Treatment - This exemption may only be requested at the time of application, reevaluation or change from exempt to mandatory participation status; or
- Caring for a child under 12 months old - This exemption can only be granted for a total of 12 months in a lifetime, regardless of the number of children you have.

TANF WORK PROGRAM

TANF WORK PROGRAM CASE MANAGEMENT

TANF Work Program **Case Management Staff** will:

- provide orientation about work program requirements;
- assess your employment skills and abilities to get and keep a job;
- determine the work activities and type of services you need to get ready for work and find a job;
- help you make an Employability Development Plan (EDP) to help you reach your employment goal;
- help you with transportation, child care and work related expenses (uniforms, tools, licenses, etc.), if you need these services to be able to participate in activities or get to work;
- help you prepare for work by providing training and instruction about work place expectations, interviewing skills, attitude, appropriate dress, hygiene, grooming, money management, shopping tips, etc. and
- help you find and keep a job by assisting you with job search activities, employer contacts, scheduling job interviews and going with you, if necessary, to job placement services, post employment follow-up, etc.

While cooperating with the TANF Work Program and meeting the requirements of your employment plan (EDP), you will continue to receive your TANF benefits and supportive services.

TANF WORK ACTIVITIES

You will work with your Case Manager to determine your employment goal. You and your Case Manager will develop an employment plan, outlining work activities needed to help you reach your employment goal as quickly as possible. You will participate in one or more of the following TANF work activities:



- Job readiness and job search activities
- Employment
- On-the-job training
- Work experience programs
- Community service programs
- Vocational education (not to exceed 12 months)
- High school or GED equivalent, if under age 20
- Job skills training directly related to employment
- Education directly related to employment

All of the above activities have certain requirements and restrictions that apply for the TANF Work Program. Your Case Manager will explain your work participation requirements to you.

TANF TOTAL EARNED INCOME DISREGARDS



TANF recipients who find full-time employment of 35 or more hours per week and earn at or above the federal minimum wage may have the earned income received from this employment totally disregarded from the **TANF budget** for up to six (6) months. If you are eligible, this will allow you to receive both your TANF benefits and your paycheck. To be eligible, you must find full-time employment:

- within thirty (30) days after your initial (first) approval for TANF benefits after July 1, 1997;
- OR-
- within thirty (30) days after the start date of your initial (first) job readiness/job search work activity in TWP.

If you do not qualify for the 6-month total earned income disregard, you may be eligible for a 3-month total earned income disregard. To qualify, your earned income must make you ineligible for TANF benefits and you must be employed at least 25 hours per week earning at or above the federal minimum wage.

If you choose to receive TANF benefits using an earned income disregard while employed, you will be using months toward your 60-month lifetime maximum benefit limit. Ask your Case Manager about the qualifications for the Six-month (6D) and Three-month (3D) TANF Total Earned Income Disregards.

Marriage Disregard



To encourage marriage and two parent families, a new spouse's income and resources will be disregarded up to six months for a TANF recipient's first marriage after October 1, 1999. TWP services will also be offered to the new spouse if the person is unemployed or underemployed.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

While you are working you may be entitled to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a federal tax benefit for working families with at least one dependent child living at home.

Families who stop receiving TANF benefits because of earned income may be eligible for the following transitional supportive services:

- Transitional Child Care
- Transitional Transportation
- Case Management/Job Counseling Services.

Ask your Case Manager about the eligibility requirements for receiving these transitional services.

SANCTIONS

If you are disqualified for failure to participate in the TANF Work Program, you will receive a full benefit sanction. A full sanction means that your TANF case will be closed. Your SNAP case will also close if you do not meet a SNAP work exemption or your benefits will be reduced. If you fail without good cause to participate satisfactorily, the appropriate penalty listed below will be applied:



- 1st offense** - 2 months without benefits*
- 2nd offense** - 6 months without benefits*
- 3rd offense** - 12 months without benefits*
- 4th offense** - permanently disqualified

*or until compliance, whichever is longer.

VOLUNTARY QUIT VIOLATION

If you quit a job, voluntarily reduce your work hours, or get terminated as a direct result of your personal actions you will receive a full benefit sanction. This will affect your TANF and SNAP benefits. You will be disqualified for the appropriate TWP sanction period. Information about a full sanction and the penalties are listed under SANCTIONS above.

FAIR HEARINGS

If you disagree with a TWP decision, you have 10 days from the date of your closure or benefit change notice to request a fair hearing if you want your TANF benefits to continue during the hearing process. Ask your Case Manager if you have any questions about your rights and responsibilities in the TANF Work Program.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TANF WORK PROGRAM, CONTACT YOUR LOCAL COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES.

NOTES



MDHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families



TANF Work Program



Mississippi's Work Program